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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLD RUEHLZ

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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1566

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4310

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2122

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1987

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2558

RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2898

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001238

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PTER KCRM TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: STATE SECURITY COUNCIL CONVENED IN
THE WAKE OF WEEKEND VIOLENCE

¶11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶12. (U) SUMMARY: On September 15, President Berdimuhamedov held a session of Turkmenistan's State Security Council. During the proceedings, the president acknowledged that there had been significant casualties during last weekend's armed clash between alleged drug traffickers and police. He also criticized law enforcement and military officials, questioning their competence to counter contemporary forms of criminal violence, and called for the establishment of law enforcement training centers to combat narcotics trafficking and terrorism. He underscored the importance of creating special counterterrorism units. END SUMMARY.

¶13. (SBU) As published in the official Neytralniy Turkmenistan newspaper, President Berdimuhamedov convened the State Security Council on September 15. The session was prompted by the September 12-13 armed clash in Ashgabat between alleged drug traffickers and law enforcement personnel. Berdimuhamedov acknowledged that law enforcement agency personnel had suffered casualties and ordered National Security Minister Amanov and Minister of Internal Affairs Amanmuradov to put forward the name of staff meriting awards for their service in the incident. (NOTE: We have learned from various sources that nine individuals died at the scene and another 50 people were wounded. Twenty of those wounded were taken to the Military Hospital and to Old Niyazov's Hospital. A number of people who were wounded have already died of severe trauma. We know specifically of the deaths of four SWAT team members, one conscript soldier, one police major, one Turkish citizen, and an MNB officer who had been seconded to UNODC. END NOTE.)

¶14. (U) Berdimuhamedov expressed condolences to the families of the deceased, pledged support to their families, and instructed that their families be provided with indemnities, allowances, and educational opportunities for their children.

He also instructed that the photographs of the fallen officers be placed in classrooms, so that pupils would "learn about the lives of these heroic people." He ordered that the investigation of the incident continue.

MILITARY AND LEGAL REFORM

¶ 15. (U) The Council session then turned to the issue of military and legal reform in Turkmenistan. The Minister of Defense reported on preparations for the next round of army conscription, and the head of the State Border Service gave an update on the status of a construction project by which all existing border posts are to be replaced with new structures during the next several years. The Justice Minister reported on the status of several draft laws related to military reform.

FOCUS ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MILITARY TRAINING

¶ 16. (U) Emphasizing Turkmenistan's active role in the international arena on combating contemporary security challenges, including counternarcotics efforts, Berdimuhamedov pledged to strengthen the new State Counter Narcotics Service and ordered the agency's head, Colonel Islamov, to develop a project for the establishment of a counternarcotics training center. He went on to underscore the importance of creating special counterterrorism units.

SHORTCOMINGS REVEALED AND LESSONS LEARNED

¶ 17. (U) Berdimuhamedov said that the September 12-13 armed clash had revealed shortcomings in law enforcement and the military. He questioned the competence to counter contemporary forms of criminal violence. Saying, "we must firmly block any attempt (against the) security and peaceful existence of our people." Berdimuhamedov told the law enforcement and military chiefs to study the means used in

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attempting to apprehend the criminals, including the shortcomings, so that tragedies like this can be avoided in the future.

¶ 18. (SBU) COMMENT: The September 12-13 armed clash has awakened Turkmenistan's leadership to the need for better prepared police and military. The incident clearly caught law enforcement unawares, and Berdimuhamedov used the forum of the Security Council to publicly air his dissatisfaction with their level of competence. END COMMENT.

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